

promptly since President Obama took office. I said at the time we were able to vote on the Alabama nominee supported by Senator SESSIONS, who was at that time the committee's ranking Republican member, and on Judge Reiss of Vermont that I hoped they would become the model for regular order. Instead, they stand out as isolated exceptions to the months of delay Senate Republicans have insisted on before considering consensus Federal trial court nominees of this President.

I am glad that there is finally agreement to proceed, as well, with circuit nominees. Two delayed from last year are outstanding women: Stephanie Dawn Thacker of West Virginia, nominated to the Fourth Circuit, and Judge Jacqueline Nguyen of California, nominated to fill one of the many judicial emergency vacancies on the Ninth Circuit. Ms. Thacker, an experienced litigator and prosecutor, has the strong support of her home State Senators, Senators ROCKEFELLER and MANCHIN. Judge Nguyen, whose family fled to the United States in 1975 after the fall of South Vietnam, was confirmed unanimously to the district court in 2009 and would become the first Asian Pacific American woman to serve on a U.S. court of appeals. Both were reported unanimously by the Judiciary Committee last year and both should be confirmed by the Senate without additional damaging delays.

I am pleased that the majority leader and the Republican leader have now come to an understanding and a path forward on these important judicial nominations. Their agreement not only helps work through the backlog of nominations stalled before the Senate, it paves the way for votes on 14 of the 22 current judicial nominations and provides a pattern for continuing to make progress beyond those 14 and beyond the current 22. There are another 8 judicial nominees who have had hearings and are working their way through the committee process. In addition, there are another 11 nominations on which the committee should be holding additional hearings during the next several weeks. By working steadily and by continuing the resumption of the regular consideration of judicial nominations, I hope the understanding between the leaders' signals we can have a positive impact and reduce judicial vacancies significantly before the end of the year. In 2004 and 2008, both Presidential election years, by working together we were able to reduce judicial vacancies to the lowest levels in decades.

Our courts need qualified Federal judges, not vacancies, if they are to reduce the excessive wait times that burden litigants seeking their day in court. It is unacceptable for hard-working Americans who turn to their courts for justice to suffer unnecessary delays. When an injured plaintiff sues to help cover the cost of his or her medical expenses, that plaintiff should not have to wait 3 years before a judge

hears the case. When two small business owners disagree over a contract, they should not have to wait years for a court to resolve their dispute.

Never before in the Senate's history have I seen the confirmation of qualified, consensus district court nominees supported by their home State Senators and reported by the Judiciary Committee blocked for months. We remain 40 confirmations and 9 months behind the pace we set during 2001 through 2004, during President Bush's first term. The judicial vacancy rate remains nearly double what it was at this time during his first term.

We 100 Senators stand in the shoes of over 300 million Americans. It is good to see the Senate agreeing to end the partisan stalling and schedule votes on these long-delayed and much-needed judges.

#### 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITALIAN UNIFICATION

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, for the past year the people of Italy have been commemorating the 150th anniversary of Italian Unification with a series of events and exhibitions throughout Italy and the world.

In this country, the Italian Embassy hosted a series of concerts, museum exhibitions, and lectures, which were widely attended and have educated and entertained Americans about the stirring story of Italy and the beauty of its culture. The Ambassador of Italy who initiated this series of commemorative events, Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, deserves recognition for organizing this remarkable program for the American people. We wish Ambassador Terzi well in his new job as Foreign Minister, and we welcome his successor, Claudio Bisogniero, as the new Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the United States.

There were many outstanding moments on the road to Italian unification—most notably March 15, 1861, the day Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed the King of a single Italian state. But several weeks earlier, on February 18, 1861, the future King of Italy convened the first Italian Parliament in Turin, establishing an Italian democratic tradition that has known both triumph and tragedy. Of course, Americans don't have to go to Italy or a cultural event to appreciate the Italian roots of our own democratic tradition. Not only did Roman history and conceptions of government inform and inspire the Founders of our own government, but the sons and daughters of Italy are all around us serving the cause of American democracy. It would be impossible to name more than a few, but even a partial list gives a sense of the magnitude of the Italian-American contribution to our democracy: John Pastore, the first Italian-American elected to this Senate; Fiorello LaGuardia, the legendary mayor of New York; Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman to be on a national

ticket; NANCY PELOSI, the first female Speaker of the House; Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Samuel Alito; and Leon Panetta, our current Secretary of Defense.

This week the Senate adopted a resolution that I introduced commemorating this anniversary and the abiding relationship between our two countries. I am glad to be joined by my colleagues, Senators BARRASSO, CASEY, ENZI, GILLIBRAND, LUGAR, SCHUMER, and SHAHEEN, as original cosponsors.

This 150th anniversary year closes during challenging times for a new generation of Italians. It is worth pausing here in Washington to salute our ally, from whom we have drawn so much talent and inspiration. We wish the citizens of the Italian Republic our best, with knowledge that during the past 150 years their Republic has endured many challenges and confidence that they will rise even higher.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO XURON CORPORATION

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, the American manufacturing sector is critical for economic expansion and job creation, employing nearly 12 million Americans across the country. Today, due to global economic downturns and increasing competition from abroad, American firms must adapt to compete in an international marketplace by incorporating creative and innovative designs. With this in mind, I rise to commend Xuron Corporation, located in Saco, ME, a shining example of an American company adapting and succeeding in an increasingly complex international economy.

Xuron, originally founded in Danbury, CT, began producing high-grade precision hand tools in 1971. In 1986, this small firm relocated to Maine to take advantage of expansion opportunities and the State's expert workforce. For over 40 years, this company has been an industry-leading developer, manufacturer, and seller of high-grade precision hand tools for multiple industries from aerospace to jewelry. With hundreds of distributors, Xuron tools can be found in factories and workshops around the world.

Just recently, the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership, MEP, program recognized Xuron for "Making it in America" due to their innovative designs, access to foreign markets, and continually creating jobs for American workers. While the great recession drastically affected businesses across the United States, Xuron surmounted all obstacles by readjusting their operations to combat the economic downturn. For instance, the company began cross-training its employees to perform a multitude of tasks ranging from manufacturing to accounting. Furthermore, the company actively removed inefficiencies along